THE VARIED BEAUTY OF THE PSALMS

BY

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ASPECTS OF THE BIBLE

THE JEWISH LIFE

THE SYNAGOGUE IN MODERN LIFE

THE EFFECTS OF RELIGION

THE FAITH OF ISRAEL

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TO

Mrs. N. J. M.

NOTE

These chapters contain the substance of a course of lectures delivered at Temple Emanu-El, New York, on Monday mornings, in the months of November and December, 1915. The lectures included illustrative readings from the Psalms and general literature, which probably formed their chief interest, and which are, at most, but alluded to in this little book. In publishing the latter, however, the author hopes he may help point out some of the many beauties of Israel's immortal poetry. When first given, the lectures were heard by a group of loyal and appreciative hearers, to all of whom the author feels grateful, and to one of the most faithful and most generous of whom he has taken the liberty of dedicating these pages.

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I

THE HISTORIC BEAUTY OF THE PSALTER

NO book of the Bible offers so fit a subject of study at present as the Psalms. Our age has witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in the spiritual life. Though this revival began before the war, the latter has intensified it.

Literature is part of life. It not only reflects the life of a people but also stimulates it. Our spiritual revival is reflected in a good deal of modern literature, and has, no doubt, been furthered by it. When was there as much of the spiritual, of the mystic, emphasized in poetry, in philosophy, in the essay and the drama as today? At such a time we naturally turn to the Psalms, the greatest and most enduring collection of spiritual poetry ever produced.

"The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms do both more briefly contain and more movingly express." Thus writes Hooker, the

sixteenth century English divine, and then he asks: "What is there necessary for men to know which the Psalms are not able to teach?" As far as the spiritual experience of man is concerned, none familiar with the Psalms will deny the justice of this question. All that goes to make up man's spiritual experience is there; his joys, longings, disappointments —his feeling and quest of God, and the happiness and the sorrows that form part of it. It is because the Psalms reflect all the beauties of the spirit—both exultant and melancholy—that they are so universal and durable, and that one is ever glad to return to them.

Not the least part of the beauty of the Psalms is hidden in their history. They are a book with a history. It is what makes them captivating at once, and more so to us than they could possibly have been to those of former days who were not aware of the fact.

The historical sense is a modern acquirement. It is the modern man who has learned that everything in the world has passed through a process of growth, and

has realized what a fine privilege it is to be able to trace growth in the world—not only in life, but also in art, in literature, in thought, in faith. In olden times they imagined that only the perfect was admirable, and the things created perfect.

Modern man has discovered two things. First, that there is no such thing as perfection on earth.

> "On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

And, secondly, that if perfection is admirable, it is no more so than the process of perfection, the struggle for it, the growth and unfoldment and outreach toward it. Rather the quest of truth he would have, said Lessing, than its possession; the latter he would leave to God. Perfection is divine; growth toward perfection is human. It interests us. It enthralls us. It forms the romance of human life. It makes for history. Only what grows has history.

The Psalms become not less but more fascinating when we realize that they are a book with a history. Time was when people thought that the Psalms were

wholly the work of King David, and that all their beauty and sanctity was bound up with such authorship.

The other day I read the beautiful 104th Psalm to some children. I had them read it by themselves at home, and then I discussed it with them, trying to get them to see its many beauties. The children had no trouble getting the meaning of that superb poem. One of them, however, asked all of a sudden whether King David had really written it all. The child was both shocked and relieved when I said that there was nothing about David in that particular Psalm, and that it was almost certainly not written by him. Evidently the child had heard some sceptical discussion of the subject. Grown people, also, are occasionally shocked to be told that David was not the author of all the Psalms, and imagine that denial of David's authorship means to rob the Psalms of all their glory.

Quite the contrary is the case. What forms one of the many beauties of this noble book is that it came not from one author, however ancient and royal, nor from one age, however illustrious. There

is so much spiritual riches in the Psalter, because in it is stored up much of the best poetry of Israel from many ages and by more singers than we shall ever know. A multitude of seers' and singers' voices are blended in its choir; all their varied experiences are mirrored in its verses; the struggles and woes and triumphs and defeats of centuries resound in its stanzas: hence, its fulness and depth and variety of beauty. This is what made it the book not of an individual but of a people. It is a people's heart that throbs in its pages. "There is a great difference," said the wise Pascal, "between a book which an individual makes and thrusts into a people and a book which itself makes a people." The Psalms came from the people and they kept on making the spiritual life of the people.

One need not have studied the Psalms long to discover how impossible it is to attribute them all to King David. That the ancients thought so, is no argument. The ancients did not trouble much about historical accuracy. They were more interested in the meaning of their tradi-

tions and literature than in a criticism of their origin, and they had a fancy for ancient and royal authors. Historical difficulties they could easily explain away. Read the Psalms, however, and you see at once that David could not have written them all. How could the Psalms depicting the destruction of the Temple, for example, or the gloom of the Babylonian captivity, have come from David? It is true that many Psalms, particularly in the early part of the book, are in the titles ascribed to David. But these headings in most cases came from later hands—from those of editors—and there is no subject more obscure than the meaning of the headings of the Psalms. The internal evidence of the Psalms themselves is stronger than the headings; and this makes it impossible to believe that most of them came from David.

The truth is that the Psalms constitute a collection. It is a treasury of sacred poems that grew up gradually. Even the present collection was not made all at once. Doubtless, it represents a final collection, which was preceded by, and based upon, smaller collections. It is a

collection of collections. Otherwise, why should we have some Psalms—for instance the fourteenth and the fifty-third—in slightly different forms in different parts of the book? Or why should "ended" be found at the close of Psalm seventy-two, though there is a goodly number of Psalms, more than half the book, still following it? These are some of the indications that the process of collecting these poems was a long one, and that it was after smaller collections had been in vogue for some time, that the final collection, as we possess it, was made.

In its present form, the Psalms consist of five books, corresponding, according to some old rabbis, to the five books of Moses. At the end of each book there is a doxology, showing the division. The books are as follows:

I.	Psalm	1— 41
II.	Psalm	42— 72
III.	Psalm	73— 89
IV.	Psalm	90—106
V.	Psalm	107—150

Various considerations lead to the conclusion that these book represent in the main three collections: first, a collection

comprising Book I; then, one comprising Books II and III; and, thirdly, one comprising Books IV and V. It is noteworthy, that in Book I are contained the simpler and more individual Psalms, while the more elaborate and communal ones are found in the later collections.

As we study the Psalter in its present form, there are many questions that we should like to be able to answer. For instance: Did David write any of the Psalms, and if so, which? Who were the other authors? How far back in Israel's history does authorship of the Psalms take us? And how far down? These are all questions of great interest. Unfortunately, we can only speculate about most of them. Little certitude we can obtain from the titles of the Psalms. They themselves are obscure, and such as they are, they were probably added by later editors.

All we can say is that in all likelihood the making of the Psalter passed through the three stages shared by the whole Bible. A certain writer has described them as follows: First, the Elemental Stage; then,

the Medial Stage; and, lastly, the Final Stage. During the first, the individual Psalms were composed by their original authors; during the second, they entered into the collections that were made from time to time; and during the last, they were all gathered into the present Psalter.

This process began in the earliest period of Jewish history. David, famed as singer as well as ruler, probably stimulated it; and it lasted until the Maccabean period, the latter part of the second century B. C., which, it is believed, itself contributed additions to the Psalter. Thus, it is easy to see how intimately the history of the Psalter is connected with the history of Israel, and how natural it is to find reflected in it the experience of Israel, with all its changes of fortune, with its triumphs and defeats.

It would be easy to construe a poetic chronicle of Israel, from the time of the flourishing kingdom down to the Babylonian captivity and the Return, by assembling the pertinent Psalms. Take, for instance, the second Psalm. Here we see the King of Zion, proud of his throne and

certain of Divine anointment and protection. He defies the rebellious princes who would throw off his yoke; their antics amuse him, as they must amuse his God. It is a triumphant ruler who greets us in the second Psalm.

"Why do the nations rage,
And the peoples imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Lord, and against His annointed, saying,
'Let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us!'
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
The Lord shall have them in derision.
Now, therefore, be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth,
Serve the Lord with fear,
And rejoice with trembling!
Worship ye, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way,
For His wrath will soon be kindled."

Equally happy is the condition portrayed in the twentieth and the twenty-first Psalms. Here we see the King go forth to battle amid the prayers and benisons of a loyal people. And we see him return, amid the joyous greetings of his

people, God having granted his heart's desire and subdued his foes.

"The king shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord;
And in Thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his lips.
He asked life of Thee, Thou gavest it him,
Even length of days for ever and ever.
His glory is great in Thy salvation:
Honor and majesty dost Thou lay upon him."

But look at the very next Psalm, the twenty-second, and what a different picture! Here we see a people forgotten of its God, delivered to the sword of famine, to the power of dogs, the mouths of lions and the horns of unicorns—in a word, left to all manner of foe. It is a picture of a people, once proud of Divine protection, laid waste and trodden underfoot.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?
How art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou answerest not;
And in the night season, and am not silent.

But be not Thou far off, O Lord:
O Thou my succor, haste Thee to help me.
Deliver my soul from the sword:
My darling, from the power of the dog.
Save me from the lion's mouth;
Yea, from the horns of the wild oxen answer me!"

A step farther we are taken in the pathetic one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm. Here we see the captives torn away from their native hearth and carried to Babylon. We see them mocked by their foes, taunted, jeered, driven to fury and despair.

"By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'
How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning!
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,

If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy!"

This mood of miserable fury, of despair, does not last, however. There is the rebound to prayer and hope, which form the core of Israel's perennial optimism. They hope and pray for return, for restoration to the holy ancestral soil.

"O, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!
When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

Finally, in the one hundred and twenty-sixth Psalm, we have a song of the returning exiles—full of the joy and the triumph—the tear-laden joy of a sweet dream come true.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
'The Lord hath done great things for them!'
The Lord hath done great things for us;
Whereof we are glad.

Turn again our captivity, O Lord,
As the streams in the south!

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed:
He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

The poetic portrayal of Jewish history in the Psalms does not end here; the subsequent period is not without imprint in its pages; but enough has been said to show that the Psalter may well be called a poetic chronicle of Israel.

Moreover, in the Psalms themselves nothing is stronger than what may be called the historic sense. Again and again we see the Psalmist dwell on the history of Israel—the wonder, the majesty, and the miracle of it all. Appreciation of the wonders of history is for the Psalmist interwoven with the thought of God. History reveals God to the poet. Some of the most noteworthy Psalms, like the sixty-eighth, are epical surveys of the march of God through history, and they cannot help reminding us of the historical character of the book itself.

Once we grasp this history, the Psalter becomes the more beautiful, as well as the more interesting. It is no longer a fixed book, a static book, a one man's book. It becomes to us, what in reality it is, a living book, the outpouring of Israel's soul through the centuries, a growing well of the joys and sorrows, the praises and exaltations, the hopes and enthusiasms of the Jewish people and its most gifted singers. And as we read it, we seem to hear again those cries and sighs, those praises and prayers, that music and musing, issuing from the various parts of Israel's dispersion.

In this historical riches lies one of the lasting beauties of the Psalms.

II

THE POETIC BEAUTY OF THE PSALMS

ONE of the unfinished tasks of literary criticism is a definition of poetry. Though often it has been tried, it is still far from settled. Ever and anon a fresh effort is made, getting little beyond discussion and the realization that it is easier to appreciate poetry than to define it. However, a recent writer on the subject has said something that touches the core. "It is the immortal in man," he says, "that speaks in poetry. In poetry he voices the soul and is part of the spirit that breathes in everything."

If that be the essence of poetry, it is natural to expect in the Psalms a great deal of poetic beauty. For what but that is the content of the Psalms? "It is the immortal in man that speaks in poetry." If anywhere in literature we find the immortal in man speaking, if anywhere we find man voicing his soul, it is in this sacred anthology of ancient Israel. This is

exactly what men have grown in the habit of calling the Psalms. "The Psalms," it has been said, "is the response of the human soul to God." Or, again: "The Psalter may be regarded as the heart's echo to the speech of God, the manifold music of its wind-swept strings as God's breath swept across them."

What we find in the Psalms is the communion of the human soul with God—of the soul in its variety of moods and experiences. The question has been asked now and then as to how much of the doctrine of immortality may be traced in the Psalms. This question has had different answers. Speculation about it will continue. But one thing is certain. In the Psalms we see the immortal in man struggling for expression, we hear the speech of the soul yearning to utter all its wants and woes, all its intimations and aspirations, we hear that expression of spiritual ecstasy which, we are told, forms the essence of poetry.

As a rule, man looketh on the outward appearance—even in poetry. That is why we often fail to recognize the poetic na-

ture and beauty of the Psalms, as well as of other parts of the Bible. Ordinarily, we associate poetry with the idea of metre, rhyme, and stanza. These things, however, we do not often find in the Psalms. Though of late efforts have been made to discover and demonstrate the existence of such outward signs of poetry in the Bible, they have had but little success. There may be an occasional rhyme in the original text of the Bible, there may be passages suggesting the presence of metre (particularly in the elegy), in some few places we may have divisions resembling stanzas. But all these occurrences are incidental. They do not belong to the essence of Biblical poetry. They do not constitute the prerequisite of poetry in the Psalms, and latter-day students have exaggerated their importance.

Nothing is more true than that the poetry of the Psalms does not depend on outward form. It is not confined within the conventional poetic restraints, and cannot be explained by a set of literary regulations. I have said that in the Psalms, above all, the soul is speaking, the

immortal in man, the spiritual. The soul knows no restraints. Its utterance scorns mechanical devices. Its ecstasy will be bound by no artificial forms. That is why it is idle to seek rhyme and metre in the Psalter, particularly in its most exalted parts. "The more natural the poetic expression of thought and feeling," it has been said, "the freer it will be from conventional regulation."

One characteristic of poetry, however, we find in the Psalms. It is a characteristic essential to all poetic expression, indeed, to all art, namely, rhythm.

Rhythm means harmony, poise, balance; it means opportunity for contemplation. Rhythm "prolongs the moment of contemplation", Mr. Yeats has said. It makes us linger on a gesture, sound, word. Perhaps that is why the poetry of the Bible, whatever it may lack, makes so much of rhythm. The men of the East were men of contemplation, of spiritual leisure, with a love for lingering on sights and sounds, on images and ideas. Perhaps this is what made for the characteristic trait of Bible poetry, which is commonly designated as Parallelism.

Parallelism means the habit of reiterating or amplifying or supplementing a thought expressed in one line by another line following it. That is the leading formal characteristic of all Bible poetry, distinguishing it from prose; and, of course, it constitutes the style of the Psalms. Ordinarily, reiteration would add little to poetic beauty; it might make for monotony and redundancy. But it has the opposite effect in the Bible. It makes for rhythm, for riches, for clarity, and for that atmosphere of contemplation which is essential to the growth of the tender flowers of the soul.

"Give ear to my words, O Lord,
Consider my meditation!
Hearken unto the voice of my cry,
My King, and my God:
For unto Thee will I pray.
My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord;
In the morning will I turn unto Thee, and will look up!
For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:
Neither shall evil dwell with Thee.
The arrogant shall not stand in Thy sight:
Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

But as for me,
In the multitude of Thy lovingkindness will
I come into Thy house:
In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy
temple."

As poetry of the soul, we can easily see what species of poetry will abound in the Psalter. Of course, the lyric. The lyric, wherever we find it, is the subjective expression of a poet's soul. It is the poetry of emotion and meditation. It was natural for the poets of Israel to produce chiefly lyrical poetry, seeing that they belonged to an emotional and meditative people. The highest flight of lyric poetry we find in the Psalms; and namely, the highest not only in Hebrew, but in all literature. Mr. Watts-Dunton has styled it the Great Lyric. Dealing with the noblest themes of life, with the depest quest of the soul, it was natural for the lyric of the Psalms thus to excell.

"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O
Lord!
Lord, hear my voice:
Let Thine ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications!
I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,

And in His word do I hope.
My soul looketh for the Lord
More than watchmen look for the morning,
Yea, more than watchmen for the morning."

Just because the lyric is the only species of poetry in the Psalms, we see it assume different forms. It reflects the soul of many poets, and the same poets in various moods. It shows us the spirit of the poet struggling with the eternal questions of life, with the hidden purposes of Providence. It shows us the poet in a reminiscent mood, in a hopeful mood, in a defiant, or melancholy, or triumphant mood.

Now it is:

"Hear my prayer, O Lord,
And let my cry come unto Thee!
Hide not Thy face from me
In the day of my distress.
For my days consume away like smoke,
And my bones are burned as a firebrand.
My heart is smitten like grass, and withered:
For I forget to eat my bread!"

And now:

"My heart is fixed, O God:
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises,
Even with my glory.
Awake, Psalter and harp:

I will awake the dawn!
I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the peoples:
And I will sing praises unto Thee among the nations.
For Thy mercy is great above the heavens,
And Thy truth reacheth unto the skies."

Again he cries:

"I am bent and bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
For my loins are filled with burning;
And there is no soundness in my flesh.
I am faint and sore bruised:
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
Lord, all my desire is before Thee;
And my groaning is not hid from Thee.
My heart throbbeth, my strength faileth me:
As for for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.
But mine enemies are lively, and are strong:
And they that hate me falsely are multiplied.
Forsake me not, O Lord:
O my God, be not far from me.
Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!"

And then again:

"I waited patiently for the Lord;

And He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of a horrible pit,
out of the miry clay;
And He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.
He hath put a new song into my mouth,
Even praise unto our God!
Many shall see it, and fear,
And shall trust in the Lord."

Or:

"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty;
Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
Or in things too wonderful for me.
Surely, I have stilled and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child with his mother:
My soul is with me like a weaned child."

It is the poetry of moods: we must understand that in order to understand the Psalms at all. Therefore, we find in the Psalms lyrics of all kinds: the pure lyric, the elegy, the dramatic lyric, the liturgic lyric, the didactic and philosophic lyric. It is the union of them all that makes the Psalter the most remarkable collection of lyrics the world has known.

"O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me:

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off!
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue,
But lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid Thine hand upon me!
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it!"

Most remarkable, however, it is that the Psalter not only reflects the mood of the poets that contributed to it their treasures. It also seems to reflect the mood of the man and the woman reading it today. Somehow those poets seem to have voiced the very needs of our own souls, the very yearnings of our own hearts, our own spiritual demands and hopes. That is what gives permanence to this poetry of the Psalms and endows it with beauty unfading. "About the best poetry," Professor Bradley has said in his Oxford Lectures on Poetry, "there floats an atmosphere of infinite suggestion". There is the secret of all great poetry, of all great art: "the atmosphere of infinite suggestion." It is

the secret of their fertility and permanence. The Psalms belong to that class. They depict the soul of the past, but also of the present. They mirror the soul-life of every reader, and herein lies a good deal of their force and fascination.

III

THE RELIGION OF THE PSALMS

WE have heard a great deal of late about the kinship of Poetry and Religion. "The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry." As far back as 1880, Matthew Arnold wrote these memorable words. There was an unconscious poetry in the religion of his day, as there is in that of every age, and that was its strongest part. This utterance of Arnold's has been cited often, and has stimulated discussion of the relationship of religion and poetry. Professor Santayana has even written a book about it. Mr. Noyes has developed it in the introduction to his Anthology of Poetry. Indeed, there seems to be unanimous feeling at present that the best part of religion is its unconscious poetry and that the best part of poetry is its unconscious religion.

No anthology of poetry has ever surpassed the Psalms, either for beauty of expression, or depth and variety of emotion. It is natural, therefore, to find in

it the classical utterance on the identity of poetry and religion. It is found in the 119th Psalm. "Songs Thy statutes have been to me in the house of my pilgrimage!" Religion was song to the Psalmist amid the vicissitudes and uncertainties of life. It was the poetry of his life.

It is interesting to inquire what sort of religion we find in the Psalms. If all poetry contains unconscious religion, in the Psalms we shall find not only unconscious religion, but conscious religion, though it is so much part of the poet and his life, that it becomes unconscious with him.

That is why it would seem wrong to try to discuss the theology of the Psalms. Such attempts are made now and then, particularly by men who try to prove the existence of certain dogmas in the Psalms. Theology is a great science, and I don't belong to those that cheaply scorn it. But it is a science. Theology is the science of religion. It depends upon analysis, argument, and system. None of these features are part of Poetry. You do not find them in the Psalms. What you find in them is

Religion, not theology—the expression of the religious ideal and emotion, not investigation and systematic presentation.

It is religion at work that you see in the Psalms—as a force in the life, in the heart, in the conduct of the various poets. "The office of poetry," G. H. Lewes has said, "is not moral instruction, but moral emulation; not doctrine, but inspiration." That is true of the religion of the Psalms. It is lyrical, not didactic. "The Psalms are the response of the human heart to God."

There are two aspects to the religion of the Psalmists, as indeed to that of every religious person. One is conduct. The other is temper, or attitude. Matthew Arnold has said that conduct is three-fourths of life; and this dictum has become a modern religious dogma. There are those who would even have us believe that religion is all conduct. This may be true, provided conduct means enough, is a comprehensive enough word. But conduct often means only outward behavior, conformity with set rules, a conventional life. In that case it can hardly be called the best part of religion. In its

best sense, Religion means both conduct and an attitude of mind, a certain attitude to the world, a certain temper, a spiritual disposition. Inspired by the latter, conduct will mean more than where it represents a mere regard for decency and for common regulations or standards.

Both these aspects are found in the religion of the Psalms.

First, there is the religion of conduct. In the Psalms we find the results of the best ethical teachings of Israel. Righteousness is the condition and expression of godliness, and righteousness means ethical action in all relations of life: purity, uprightness, honesty, regard for others, neighborliness. Righteousness is demanded of the community and the individual, and the higher the individual, the more unquestionable his devotion to righteousness must be. The king shall rule through righteousness. All this is expressed not in didactic form, but in lyrical: through the joy and happiness and security that the poet finds in the life of righteousness.

"Lord who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh
righteousness,
And speaketh truth in his heart."

No nobler lyric of the upright life, of godly conduct, has ever been written, nor of faith in its durableness.

"He that doeth these things shall never be
moved!"

But even more important than conduct, is the side of the Psalmists' religion that shows their religious temper of mind, their attitude to life and the world. That is the part of religion we seek particularly in the poets. It is the finer side of religion, its very breath. It is the eternal part of religion, remaining the same, however outward conduct may change. It is this side of religion that has made the Psalms so immortal a work of religious poetry.

"O ye sons of men,
How long shall my glory be turned into
dishonor?
How long will ye love vanity and seek after
falsehood?
But know
That the Lord hath set apart him that is
godly for Himself:
The Lord will hear when I call unto Him!

Many there be that say, Who will show us
any good?
Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy counte-
nance upon us!
Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than they have when their corn and
their wine are increased.

In peace will I both lay me down and sleep:
For Thou, Lord, alone makest me dwell in
safety!"

What are the chief elements in the religious temper of the Psalmists? It seems to me, there are four. First, trust; then, joy; then, humility, and finally, worship. These four elements blended together make the religious temper of the Psalmists.

First, trust. The sense of trust we find on every page of the Psalter. It is part of faith in God. The Psalmist believes in God, and doing so, he trusts Him, no matter what the circumstances or surprises of life. A righteous God must mean a righteous world, and it must mean ultimate triumph for the cause of the righteous. This conviction is voiced in the unshakable trust which is the foundation of the Psalmist's religion. It is voiced

also in those violent utterances against the unrighteous, which so many modern readers find difficult and objectionable. These utterances are not inspired chiefly by hate and vengefulness. They are inspired by the conviction that what is unrighteous cannot endure and that its perpetrators and protagonists must surely perish.

"For the Lord is righteous; He loveth righteousness:
The upright shall behold His face."

Trust leads to joy. It is impossible for one ruled by such convictions of the stability and triumph of righteousness ever to despair. He may have moments of depression, of sadness, of doubt: pessimistic moments; but his spirit must rebound toward joy. Trust is prophetic. It goes beyond the failures of the moment to the vindications and the victories of the morrow. It clings to the future. That is why joy throbs so mightily in the songs of the Psalmists. "Weeping may tarry for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart!" "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy!" Joy cometh

—light is sown—they shall reap in joy: it is the vision of the happy future that makes for the joy of the Psalmists.

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:
But mercy shall compass him that trusteth in the Lord.
Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous:
And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart!"

What makes such joy possible is another characteristic of the Psalmist: his humility. He is content to accept the defects of the present and yet look joyously to the future, because he is humble. He knows that the world was not made for him solely. He realizes that he cannot know everything. He understands that there are many things too high for him. He quiets his soul, as a weaned child is quieted by its mother. It reconciles him to life, and makes endurance possible. Humility helps him over the rough places of life.

It is because of humility that he is fit for another phase of the religious life, a phase without which there can be no religion, namely worship. Worship means

adoration, the recognition of the grandeur of the world, the soul's discovery of the wonder of God, life, and the universe. There is no religion where worship is not. Worship is the soul of religion, it is the soul of all art and beauty. Philanthropy is not the all in all of religion, though it may be part of it. Worship is the beginning and the end of religion. The Psalmists are full of the sense of worship, and that is why their poetry is the greatest religious poetry ever written.

"Poetry will return with religion," Mr. Bliss Carman writes in his essay on "A Distaste for Poetry." Distaste for poetry and for religion is one very often. Mr. Carman would have us see in the contemporary distaste for poetry a sign of the same tendency that is found in the distaste for religion. True lovers of Poetry and Religion have always loved the Psalms. In them the noblest religion has found most beautiful utterance. They offer more than any other work what Mr. Carman has called the good part of poetry, as of life, that "which stimulates the spirit and renews its zest, its strength, its fortitude."

IV

MYSTICISM IN THE PSALMS

ONE of the most noteworthy characteristics of the spiritual life of the present is the revival of interest in mysticism. For centuries no such phenomenon has been witnessed. Present-day interest in mysticism is exhibited in the various departments of thought and life, while the number of books on the subject is altogether unprecedented. Every country is represented, as well as every religion.

A recent writer has said quite justly that there are two classes of people interested in mysticism—those that are curious about the history of the mystical element in human thought and those who really live, or wish to live, the mystical life. It is either an intellectual or a devout interest. Whatever the cause, however, the mystical wave in modern thought is one of the most striking phenomena in the spiritual life of today.

One cannot study the diverse beauties of the Psalms without being impressed

with the note of mysticism that pervades them. Modern writers, in speaking of the literature of the mystics, do not always recall this fact. In reality, however, the Psalms maybe designated as the chief classic of religious mysticism. "We understand the Psalms in many places but half-way," a German writer has said, "if we regard their authors as ordinary religious men. Some of the Psalmists were mystics, pietists, who had an altogether immediate relation with God."

The mystics of old recognized it, as is witnessed by their use of the Psalms, and their constant reference to them. It is certain that as far as the purest form of religious mysticism is concerned—mysticism pure and undefiled—the expression it finds in the Psalms has never been surpassed—in originality or beauty. Whatever later mystics have written is either an amplification or variation of what is contained in the Psalms. And for good reasons.

For, what is mysticism? Like all popular words, its meaning is rather vague to most people. Its definitions are numerous. Yet, what is it?

Let us remember, first of all, that it refers to a type of religion. It may be used occasionally apart from religion; for instance, to designate a kind of art, or poetry, or even ethics. "Mysticism is the art of union with Reality," says Miss Underhill. But this is a loose use of the term, a pale definition. Essentially, mysticism is a type of religion. Even when applied to literature or art or ethics, it carries, however subtly, a religious suggestion.

What kind of religion, then, is mysticism? Mr. Rufus M. Jones, who has written much on the subject, defines it as follows: "Mysticism is the type of religion which puts emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence." On the whole, this is as good a definition as we have. Mysticism is the immediate consciousness of God, the direct experience of religious truth, the personal perception of the beauty and reality of the spiritual world, the attachment of the human soul to the Soul of the universe.

This is what differentiates mysticism from other forms of religion: from those

which depend on argumentation or reasoning. And this is why in the course of history we often encounter a mystic wave after a period of emphasis on the intellectual or rational side of religion. Men have invariably tired of the attempt to uphold or crush religion with weapons of the intellect, of reason, philosophy, or science. Always there has been a recession to personal, direct, spontaneous—intuitive—religion: to mystic religion. This is what time and again has happened in Christianity, as well as in Judaism and every other faith. Weary of rationalism, the world has returned to mysticism. And this is what is happening today, by way of reaction from the over-confidence and over-emphasis of science in the past century. "Mysticism," says Goethe, "is the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings." Or, as Pascal has it, "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of." The religion of the heart is mysticism.

If this be mysticism, the Psalms are full of it, in its purest, most genuine, and most undefiled form. Unfortunately, a great

deal has passed for mysticism that is hardly worthy the name; that, indeed, has made mysticism a by-word. It has often been identified with magic, with traffic in the occult, with various spiritual extravagances and aberrations. Charlatanism ofttimes has worn its cloak. This is false mysticism, from which it is necessary to distinguish the pure and genuine type.

Of such false mysticism we find not a trace in the Psalter. Its mysticism is pure, original, springing from the unpolluted fountain-head of mystic emotion. It is free from aberration. It has none of the corruption of the ancient Orient, nor of the later mystical follies of the Occident. The type of spiritual mysticism exalted by the best of the moderns—this is what we find in the Psalms: mysticism pure and undefiled.

What are some of its elements? What forms the mysticism of the Psalmists? It would be interesting to compare what some modern writers have to say about the nature of the mystical life. One says it means faith in God, in the goodness and significance of life, and in immortality. Another identifies it with various degrees

of contemplation. And so on. What formed the mysticism of the Psalmists? I shall name the following elements: Enlightenment, yearning, the sense of the Divine Presence, and the joy of it all.

First, enlightenment. The mystic is the person who possesses spiritual illumination. Where others grope in the dark, struggle and stumble, he sees—sees clearly, by virtue of an inner light. He possesses certitude, the kind that, according to Boutroux, formed the religion of Pascal: "The certitude of feeling and heart, immediate and absolute; the kind that comes from sight and not from reason" *(Celle qui vient de la vue non du raisonnement)*. "It lies around us like a cloud," says Harriet Beecher Stowe:

> "It lies around us like a cloud—
> A world we do not see;
> Yet the sweet closing of an eye
> May bring us there to be."

Is not this what the very word mystic means? It comes from a Greek word, meaning to close one's eyes. The mystic, we are told, is one who closes the avenue of sense, not in order to be in darkness, but that the divine light may flow in upon

his inner sight and enlighten him. "Lovers," says Patmore, "put out the candle and draw the curtains when they wish to see the god and the goddess, and in the higher communion, the night of thought is the light of perception." "The soul," an ancient mystic has said, "possesses a secret avenue to the divine nature, where all things become naught for it." This is what makes for the religious certainty of the mystic, where others find difficulty and obstacle. He sees in the dark, in the remote distance, in the dust:—everywhere he beholds the light and glory divine. Nowhere do we find more evidence of such enlightenment than in the Psalms. "The Lord is my light and my salvation." "Light is sown for the righteous!" "In Thy light shall we see light." Others may doubt and walk in darkness; the Psalmist sees light, and sees it clearly.

The reason why he sees this light, is that he yearns for it. It has been said that mysticism is "religion in its most intense, acute, and living stage." This is the sort of religion we find in the Psalmists. They yearn for God; therefore, His light is granted them.

Yearning is the beginning of spiritual life, of all possession of beauty and holiness. Where there is no yearning, naught happens. One of the greatest mytsics was Master Eckhart. According to him, the object of all religion is "that God might be born in the soul and the soul in God: for this all the Scriptures were written, for this God created the whole world: in order that God might be born in the soul and the soul in God." If this does not happen in your case, he says, he is sorry for you. But even more sorry he is for you if you do not yearn for it. Even though you cannot have such an experience, you may at least feel a yearning for it. And if one lacks the yearning, one at least should yearn for the yearning. As David puts it: "I have yearnt a yearning, O Lord, for Thy righteousness!"

This sort of craving for God we find in the Psalter; on every page of it. Master Eckhart said: "May God help us so to yearn for God that He Himself may seek to be born within us!" There are many such utterances in the Psalms. The Psalmists crave for God, they seek Him, they look for Him, they surrender them-

selves to Him, and constantly pray that He may come to them, and find them, and search them—search them to their inmost parts, and possess them. "Mine eyes yearn for Thy salvation, and for the word of Thy righteousness!" "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O, when wilt Thou come unto me?" "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

"Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting."

It is such yearning that forms the source of the Psalmist's religion.

From it comes his satisfaction, also. He feels the presence of God. The reason why so many do not feel that presence is that they do not want it, do not seek it. Master Eckhart has said that a poor man is he who wants nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing. The reason why some do not have God, nor know Him, is that

they do not want Him. "As our aspiration is," says A. E., "so will be our inspiration and power." The Psalmist wants God; therefore, he knows Him. "The secret of the Lord is to them that fear Him." "Taste and see that the Lord is good." "The Lord is good to the good and to those who are upright of heart!" Living a godly, a pure, a noble life, the Psalmist is conscious everywhere of the Divine Presence. Nay, more. He feels not only the presence of God, but His unescapable presence. Nothing can separate him from God. God is everywhere. Not even sin can set him apart from God. He cannot flee from Him. In Thompson's bold metaphor: he cannot escape the Hound of Heaven. The Divine Presence pursues Him. It is everywhere. He cannot elude it. He cannot miss it. The universe is full of God.

"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"

This possession of God makes for the Psalmist's joy. What are the material compensations of the world in comparison with the feeling that he is at one with

God, that God is with him everywhere? Greater is his joy than have "they"—the others—when their corn and wine are increased. From this sense of joy, some of the most beautiful Psalms have sprung.

"A work can never grow old," says Maeterlinck, himself one of the chief mystics of today, "except in proportion to its anti-mysticism." There are many beauties that have kept the Psalms from growing old. But nothing so much as the mystic beauty that pervades their poetry and finds a response in every heart.

V

THE PSALMS OF PENSIVE DOUBT

"THE lyric," says Professor Moulton, "is the confidante of the human soul in all its needs." There is hardly a lyric poet whose mood is always the same, who always sings in the same key. It is natural to find in the Psalms a variety of moods, particularly when we recall that the Psalms contain the songs of different poets of many ages. Many moods are mirrored in the Psalms, and that is one of the secrets of their fascination.

Doubt is one mood expressed in the Psalms. And herein these poets of the Bible strike one of their most universal notes. They thus mark their kinship to all humanity. For what sentiment, what condition, is so universal as the one of doubt, of wonder, of questioning? To think is to doubt; to doubt is to think. Doubt means reflection, and reflection is the fountainhead of philosophy. "He never truly believed," says an old divine, quoted by Coleridge, "who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief."

Of course, there are two kinds of doubt. There is the doubt of the indifferent and the callous—of the fool and the vainglorious, as the Psalmist might have called them—and, on the other hand, the doubt of the true believer, of the earnest seeker of truth. The latter form of doubt is the more poignant, the more distressing, just because it means a clash with faith, breaking in upon the serenity and assurance of faith, and trying the inmost heart of the faithful.

In the case of the Psalmist, of no matter what group or age, there never can be the least question as to his godliness. He believes in God, clings to Him, believes in the goodness and rightness of the Divine Plan, and he means to order his life in harmony with such belief. Little patience has he with the scornful, the godless, "the fool that saith in his heart, There is no God." Atheism marks for him the abyss of folly, as does also the iniquitous life, which is the practical expression and sequel of atheism. He is just as convinced as are many modern thinkers that atheism is a menace to morality: Mr. Balfour, in his defense of theism, does

not go beyond the Psalmist in this respect.

> "The fool hath said in his heart,
> 'There is no God!'
> They are corrupt, they have done
> Abominable works;
> There is none that doeth good."

Yet there are times when the very foundations of the Psalmist's faith are shaken by actual experience—by what happens to him, or in the world at large—and that is what opens the door to doubt; not the doubt of the proud and scornful, not arrogant doubt, but pensive doubt, the doubt of the wounded and baffled, though faithful, soul.

What is it that gives rise to such a state of mind in the Psalmist?

First, the Psalmist's own fate is often the cause. There are times when he finds it hard to reconcile his condition in life with his conduct and the faith that inspired it.

The Psalmist has tried to live a godly life. His chief concern has been to live uprightly, to find favor with God, and to purge his life and thought of every trace of ungodliness. If he has failed, it was

not for lack of the right mind or purpose, nor is failure unfollowed by penitence and the desire to mend. His whole aim is to be in accord with the Divine Will.

According to the faith of the Psalmist, such conduct is supposed to win Divine approval and to bring joy and happiness. His theory of Religion has it that godliness is rewarded with prosperity and happiness, while wickedness leads to ruin. Yet, in actual life, quite the contrary often occurs. The Psalmist, though devoted to godliness, is far from prosperous. On the contrary, he has to endure hardship, oppression, poverty, and illness, while happiness, wealth and health, prosperity forms the lot of his enemies and persecutors, who have mocked morality and laughed godliness to scorn.

Such occurrences the Psalmist cannot witness without injury to his faith, without deep doubt arising in his mind as to the meaning and worth of his theory of life.

"Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?
Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?

Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God,
And say in his heart, Thou wilt not require
it?"

Some of the most poignant Psalms have their origin in such experience.

But there is, also, the experience of the Psalmist's people, of Israel.

Some of the Psalms were written during Israel's days of prosperity, and the mood pervading them is one of joy and triumph, even of defiance, inspired by consciousness of Divine choice and love, of Divine distinction. Other Psalms, however, came from other times. Israel is no longer triumphant. The people has been overwhelmed by calamity, the heathen have entered the Temple, the Holy City is laid waste, the people is carried captive to an alien land, and there suffers all manner of indignity and reproach. The question has arisen as to what had become of God's love for Israel. Is Israel still His people, is there still a great purpose and future in store for it? And, if so, why are so many trials laid upon it, and why is its lot so much worse than the lot of its foes?

"O God, why hast Thou cast us off for ever?

Why doth Thine anger smoke against
the sheep of Thy pasture?
How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme Thy name for ever?"

It is easy to see what agony the suffering of Israel must have caused to the poets of the period—what anguish of mind, what doubt, particularly when they contrasted the sad plight of the present with the storied glories of the past. And this anguish is rendered the more intense and keen by the spectacle of some Jews who, made disloyal by the new conditions, seem to fare much better than those who are still loyal, though mocked and persecuted for their faith. Brooding on the fate of his people, and particularly of the more devoted and faithful part of it, could not but engender doubt in the heart of the Psalmist.

No less calculated to create such a mood are those moments when the Psalmist falls to thinking about the lot not only of his people, but of all humanity.

If the fate of his people often has puz-

zled him, if his personal life has made him wonder, what of the life of man? Is not human life in general a thing to make one question and wonder?

Psalmists were naturally led from one phase of doubt to the next. They were the pioneers of religious reflection. Once the theory of their faith seemed shaken by their own personal life, it was natural for the doubt to spread, to reach out to others, to embrace finally the whole of human life, the whole race of men.

What makes them doubt is the brevity, the shadowiness, the futility of the very life of man. "What is man, O Lord, that Thou knowest him: or the son of man that Thou countest him?" Amid the magnificent objects of the rest of Creation, amid the everlasting mountains and unnumbered stars, of what worth is mortal man, what does the frail human creature count for?

> "Man is like to vanity:
> His days are as a shadow
> That passeth away!"

The Psalms born of this phase of the poet's doubt, are among the most beautiful and most affecting in the book.

From these three sources the muse of the Psalmists was fed when in the mood of doubt. The significant thing, however, is the way out of doubt found by these poets. What did it lead to? Did it lead to denial of God, to the abandonment of faith, to despair? Quite the contrary.

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Than in half the creeds,"

a modern poet has said. The Psalmists were the first to prove it. Doubt led not to less faith but to more—it led to a purer, more exalted, more trustful form of religion and conduct. I said that the Psalmists were not ordinary religious persons, but mystics, and that we cannot understand them unless we realize it. "Mysticism," it has been said rightly, "is the certainity that grows up in the presence of mystery." That is what makes the mystic. In the face of mystery, he is certain. Where there is occasion for wavering, he is steadfast. Where there is peril of collapse, his heart is firm, unshakable, invincible.

> "How long, O Lord?
> Wilt Thou forget me for ever?

How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
Consider and answer me, O Lord my God:
Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death!
But I have trusted in Thy mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation:
I will sing unto the Lord!"

Such, in effect, is the certainty and steadfastness of the Psalmists. Doubt makes them stronger; through it they mount to a faith more pure and joyous and aspirant than ever.

And thus they became the pattern of many a later poet, as well as the solace of all hearts.

VI

THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE IN THE PSALMS

IT has become a sort of superstition with literary critics that in Hebrew poetry we find no real appreciation of the beauties of Nature.

The idea can be traced back to a famous passage in Alexander von Humboldt's work, *Cosmos*. In Hebrew poetry, he says, "Nature is portrayed, not as self-subsisting, or glorious in her own beauty, but ever in relation to a higher, an overruling, spiritual power."

This utterance of the great German naturalist gave rise to the notion that in the poetry of the Hebrews we find no such appreciation of Nature as may be found in Greek and Roman, as well as in modern, poetry. With the Hebrew poets, contemplation of God is supposed to have prevented sympathetic study and absorption of the manifold beauties of Nature.

This notion I call a superstition, because it is not founded on fact, but rather

seems to have made its way from one writer to the next, without careful inspection. It is certainly unfair to deny to the ancient Hebrews love and appreciation of the beauties of Nature. During certain periods in their later history there is good ground for believing that the Jews were estranged from Nature. Other interests and passions drove from their life the joyous contemplation of Nature. We may assume this to have happened when some rabbis maintained that it was a mortal sin to interrupt one's studies in order to admire a beautiful tree, or a beautiful field. Such periods of the decay of the esthetic sense, no doubt, have occurred in the course of Israel's checkered history.

But this is not true of the Bible period. As long as the Jews lived a natural life, unthwarted and uncorrupted by persecution, they were lovers of Nature. During the earliest periods of their history they surely were alive to the beauties of Nature. First, they lived the life of shepherds and farmers—a life that cannot help leading to contemplation of Nature, and, in a sensitive people, to a love of it. And, secondly, Palestine was a country pre-emi-

nently designed to arouse and develop the sense of Nature. For, Palestine is a land of many moods and colors; it is a land of mountains and valleys, of streams and lakes, a land that within small compass offers great variety of scene. It is a land of "solitary places." What so calculated to arouse the soul to the beauties of Nature, and to inspire love of its mysteries and majesties? There are numerous places in the Bible that reveal such appreciation of Nature, and they abound particularly in the Psalms.

To begin with, the Psalmists make frequent use of Nature imagery.

One thing that critics usually miss in Bible poetry is description of detail. This defect was first pointed out by Humboldt. "It dwells less on details of phenomena," he said of Hebrew poetry, "and loves to contemplate great masses." That to him was a reflex of the monotheism of Israel, which was prone to dwell on the unity, rather than the variety, of the world's phenomena.

And there is much truth in this observation. The Jew's eye did fasten on the

unity, the all-embracing majesty, the overwhelming splendor of the world. Also, upon the spirit that resided within the world, and behind all its sights and scenes, no matter how beautiful and arresting in themselves. Always the Jew's eye sought in and beyond and behind Nature the one chief Reality—Nature's God. That is whither his eye travelled, reached, sought—that is what lured his soul. It is the supreme truth about Hebrew poetry, thought, and life.

But all this did not destroy the outward world for the Jew. He saw it. He pondered over it. He heard its manifold message. And nowhere do we find better proof of this than in the Nature imagery of the Psalms.

The similes and metaphors of the Psalmists show that these poets were familiar observers of Nature and that they spontaneously used its scenes for the vivid expression of ideas. "The mountains are round about Jerusalem, and the Lord is round about His people." "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we are

escaped." "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South."

Ethical and spiritual truths are brought home by a striking picture or similitude from Nature. Take the very first Psalm: the righteous man is pictured as a tree planted by a stream of water, bearing its fruit in its season and with its leaf never withering; on the other hand, the wicked is as the chaff blown away by the wind. Here we have perfect little scenes from Nature: we see the tree, and its setting, and we see the chaff driven on by the wind. And the poet must have seen these scenes and seen them often, before they became part of his mental vision and a vehicle of spiritual truth.

Such Nature imagery we find in great variety. What could be more desolate than the picture the poet draws of his estate in the one hundred-and-second Psalm?

"Hear my prayer, O Lord,
And let my cry come unto Thee.
For my days consume away like smoke,
And my bones are burned as a firebrand.
My heart is smitten like grass, and withered;
For I forget to eat my bread.

I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am become as an owl of the waste places.
I watch, and am become
Like a sparrow that is alone upon the housetop.
My days are like a shadow that declineth:
And I am withered like grass."

What a picture of loneliness—a sparrow alone on the housetop!

Yet it would be foolish to envy the wicked:

"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers,
Neither be thou envious against the unrighteous:
For they shall soon be cut down like grass,
And wither as the green herb."

Righteousness, however, is secure:

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree,
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon."

And as for the Divine Righteousness, the mountains alone can serve as its proper image—those mountains that so often serve as inspiration to the Prophets and poets of Israel:

"Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, is in the heavens,

Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.
Thy righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
Thy judgments are like the great deep!"

Indeed, has the fusion of Nature and Poetry ever engendered a more beautiful depiction of undying faith than the twenty-third Psalm?

Nor are descriptions of Nature, indicative of an appreciation of the grandeur and magnificence of Creation, wanting in the Psalms. We may have a mere enumeration of the various parts and phenomena of Nature, massed so as to bring out its variety and magnitude. It is true that there is no minute description. But details would have destroyed the massiveness of the picture. It is the grandeur of Nature that is in the mind of the poet, and it is best expressed by the massing up of scenes. Attempt at detail would merely have proven the inadequacy of poetic description.

Take, for example, the eighth Psalm, where the magnificence of Creation is suggested by the mere array of its diverse parts: heaven, earth, moon, stars, beasts, fishes, waters, and all that passeth through

the paths of the sea, and man master of it all, and thus but little lower than God. In a few lines the poet succeeds in conveying the idea of the manifold magnificence of Nature.

Even more impressive is the panorama of Nature in the one hundred-and-fourth Psalm, in which the poet is overwhelmed with the multiple splendor and glory of Nature and moved to intense joy by the contemplation of it all.

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all:
The earth is full of Thy riches.
I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being:
Let my meditation be sweet unto Him!"

Again, Nature is often depicted in the Psalms as sympathizing with man in his various experiences. Such sympathy of Nature with man is the truest indication of a poet's kinship to Nature. It means the self-identification of the poet with Nature, perfect union with it. This is a sense of relationship that modern poetry, in particular, has attained. But such sympathy of Nature with man we find re-

peatedly in the Bible,— in the Prophets and the Psalmists. Nature takes part in the joy and the sorrow of the poet, in his lament and jubilation. Nature is especially present on the great heroic occasions of Israel's history celebrated in the Psalms. Consider, for example, the Psalm singing the march of Israel out of Egypt: the sea fleeing, Jordan turning backward, the mountains dancing like rams, the hills like little sheep!

"What aileth thee, O sea, that thou fleest?
Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?
Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams,
Ye hills, like young sheep?

Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob;
Who turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of waters."

Above all, however, Nature is the great wonder-book of God.

"The heavens declare the glory of God:
And the firmament showeth His handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge.
There is no speech nor language,
Their voice cannot be heard.

Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world."

It is Nature, rather than man, that reflects the majesty and might of God, and it is a sign of man's surpassing worth that he has been made master of Nature. But for his perception of the beauties of Nature, but for his keen realization of its wonders, the Psalmist would not have been the worshiper that he was. When he hears the mighty roaring of the sea, he is reminded of the mightier voice of God.

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
The floods have lifted up their voice:
The floods lift up their roaring.
Above the voices of many waters,
The mighty breakers of the sea,
The Lord on high is mighty!"

The storm so vividly and powerfully pictured in the twenty-ninth Psalm fills him with a sense of trust.

"The Lord will give strength to His people,
The Lord will bless His people with peace."

Nature inspires the Psalmist to worship, and in his most exalted moods he calls upon Nature to worship with him, turning all the endless voices of Nature into one God-intoxicated and exultant choir.

"Praise ye the Lord!
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
Praise Him in the heights.
Praise ye Him, all His angels:
Praise ye Him, all His hosts.
Praise ye Him, sun and moon:
Praise Him, all ye stars of light.
Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that be above the heavens.
Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire and hail, snow and vapor:
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word:
Mountains and all hills;
Fruitful trees and all cedars:
Beasts and all cattle:
Creeping things and flying fowl:
Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth:
Both young men and maidens;
Old men and children:
Let them praise the name of the Lord."

VII

MUSIC AND DANCE IN THE PSALMS

IN his great essay on Poetry, Mr. Watts-Dunton points out how conscious the Greeks were of the close relation of poetry to the arts of music and dancing. At the Dionysian festivals, which had a religious character and included dancing, it was to the poet, as teacher of the chorus, that the prize was awarded. The poet was a singer, and was thus designated. According to Mr. Watts-Dunton, the superiority of Greek poetic art was due in no small measure to the consciousness of its relationship to the two sister-arts.

What was true of Greece, no doubt, was equally true elsewhere. The origin of poetry—which is the rhythmic expression of human emotions—may safely be said to have been intertwined with music and the dance. In the course of time, the three separated. Music and dance developed apart from Poetry. But the remembrance of the original association never disappeared. The dance survived

in the drama, while music lingered on in lyrical poetry.

The Hebrews of antiquity were no exception. Among them, also, we see poetry go hand in hand with music. The same emotional nature that gave birth to the lyric, the same love of contemplation that was reflected in poetic rhythm, expressed itself also in music and dance. The most casual reader of the Psalms cannot fail to observe the constant allusions to these things, and we cannot understand the Psalms if we do not recognize the part that these two arts played in the life of the people that produced them.

Let us take music first. The people of the Bible were a musical people. They loved music and showed their love for it on every possible occasion. It is significant that the birth of music was traced back by them to earliest times, to the age before the deluge. In the book of Genesis we read that Lamech had three sons: Jubal, the second, was the father of all such as handle harp and pipe, just as his elder brother, Jabal, was the ancestor of all tent-dwelling shepherds, while their

half-brother, Jubal-Cain, was "the instructor of every artificer at brass and iron." Of Lamech himself a little song is recorded, the first in the Bible.

"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice!
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech!
For I have slain a man for wounding me,
And a young man for bruising me:
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold!"

All this is most significant. One need not accept this account as historical. It may be folklore. But the folklore of a people—particularly an ancient one—throws light on its ideas concerning the origins and purposes of life. What we have in this account is a suggestion, at all events, of the Hebrew conception of the antiquity of music, and perhaps also of its relation to both pastoral and industrial life. Music was as old as the earliest period of human history. Its originator was brother to a shepherd and half-brother to the father of the industries, and the father of them all was the man with whom the first song is associated. There is certainly a great deal of historic truth in this conception.

If music was thought to have begun in earliest times, it remained a favorite element in Israel's life. No festive occasion was complete without it. It was part of every celebration, of every gathering of the people, as well as of worship. When schools of the prophets came into vogue, music was a means of working up inspiration. Bands of musicians, no doubt, were attached to these prophetic schools. There were regular musicians at the royal court. As for the Temple worship, the musical part of it grew in importance with the years. King David is said to have organized guilds of Temple singers. These guilds, whenever they may have originated, certainly gained prominence after the exile, first rivaling the Levites and finally surpassing them in prestige.

The Psalms are full of reference to the important part that music played in the life of the people.

> "Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good!
> Make music to His name, for it is pleasant!"

In fact, most of the Psalms were musical compositions, and there is good ground to

believe that even Psalms originally written as pure lyrics, were set to music later on and used for liturgic purposes.

The very name indicates it. Psalms comes from a Greek word meaning a song sung to a stringed instrument. It corresponds to the Hebrew word *mizmor,* meaning the same thing. When the English Version reads: "Sing praises," as in the verse I have just quoted, the proper reading often should be: "Make music," or "Play and sing," for that is what the Hebrew *zammer* implies.

The present Psalter was probably founded on a number of previous collections, possessed by guilds of musicians, the names of some of which have come down to us, namely: *Korah, Asaph, Heman,* and *Ethan.* Besides, the titles of many Psalms contain musical references, most of which we do not understand, but which no doubt were clear to those for whom the collection was made. The final compilation was made for the liturgy of the Second Temple, where it formed the hymn-book for a service that had meantime developed an elaborate musical

ritual. Thus, music pervades the whole of the Psalter.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth!
Break forth and sing for joy, and play!
Sing and play unto the Lord with the harp,
With the harp and the voice of melody.
With trumpets and sound of cornet
Make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein;
Let the floods clap their hands;
Let the hills sing for joy together!"

From the Psalms we also learn what sort of musical instruments were in vogue among the ancient Hebrews. Their actual representations are supplied by Egyptian and Assyrian monuments, as well as by the Arch of Titus.

There were three kinds of instruments: (1) wind instruments: the flute, the horn, and the trumpet; (2) string instruments: the harp and the psaltery; and (3) instruments of percussion: the drum, cymbals, and castanets. These various instruments had their special uses: the flute, e. g., was used specially for dances and processions, the horn for warlike blasts, the trumpet

was the priest's special instrument; the drum, also, was a favorite for festive processions. But in the Psalms, and the various events depicted in them, we find them all united as in a grand orchestral combination.

"Praise God in His sanctuary!
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet:
Praise Him with the psaltery and harp.
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:
Praise Him with stringed instruments and the pipe.
Praise Him upon the loud cymbals:
Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals:
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!"

No less integral a part of the people's life was the dance. It, also, formed part of every festive occasion. It went with music and song. The victories of the people are thus celebrated. Miriam and her companions celebrate with song, music, and dance the victory over Pharaoh. In similar fashion Jephtah's daughter and her friends mark the victory over the Ammonites, while David returning from the battle with the Philistines, is

met thus by the women of his time. The dance was not absent from religious functions: witness David's dancing with all his might when the Ark is brought back to the land of Israel. Indeed, every religious festival and procession contained the feature of dancing, as one may judge from the fact that the Hebrew word for festival, *hag*, was derived from an old Semitic word meaning dance.

"They have seen Thy goings, O God,
Even the goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
The singers went before, the minstrels followed after,
In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels."

It is because the festive procession of the dance formed so conspicuous a part in the life of the people, that we find it alluded to so often in the Psalms.

"Sing unto the Lord a new song,
And His praise in the assembly of the saints.
Let them praise His name in the dance:
Let them sing and play unto Him with the timbrel and harp!"

What made for this prominence of music and dance? It was the element of joy in the religion of the people.

"Serve the Lord with gladness,
Come before Him with singing!"

Israel's religion was one of joy, and it found expression in the forms and the arts through which joy seeks an outlet. This began when the religion of Israel still had much in common with the Nature festivals of earliest times—the vintage, the harvest, and similar occasions. But it continued in later times. Though the meaning of the feasts may have changed, their joyous nature remained, and it found vent in music and dance, in song and psalm.

VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF THE PSALMS

IN the course of our study, we have caught a glimpse of the varied beauty of the Psalms.

We have seen how this superb collection of Jewish song grew up, and what beauty is hidden in this very process of growth. We have examined the nature and the unique excellence of the poetry of the Psalms. We have dwelt on the Religion that quickened those sacred poets. We have, also, considered the mystic fountains of their faith and life. And, finally, we have tried to realize their love and enjoyment of Nature, which so strongly pervades their poetry, as well as the relation of the latter to music and dance, the sister-arts of song.

Though for its own beauties the Psalter is thus remarkable, it is no less so for the influence it has exercised in the life of humanity. Indeed, no further evidence is needed of the worth and beauty of the Psalms than the universal joy and love

with which humanity has accepted them, appropriated and cherished them.

There may be dispute as to whether a work of art really should be judged great according to the universality of its appeal, as Tolstoy, for example, would have us think. A work may be great, though appreciated by only a few. But it certainly is a sign of supreme greatness if an artistic creation strikes with wonder and inspires with love all alike—the few and the many, the learned and the simple, the far and the near. That is the highest test of genius.

And this is exactly what has happened with the Psalms. Their influence has been universal. The whole world has loved them, joyed in them, made them its own. They have won the heart of all alike—of men of most varied stations and occupations, of diverse mental cultivation, of most diverse kinds of descent and disposition. "No single Book of Scripture," says Bishop Perowne, "has, perhaps, ever taken such hold on the *heart* of Christendom."

Mr. Prothero has written a learned and fascinating book to show what hold the

Psalms have had on the heart of men, and what part they have played in human life, and the very popularity of Mr. Prothero's work, passing through many editions in several years, in itself attests the power of the Psalter.

Let us look for a moment at this influence of the Psalms.

We see it, first, in what it has meant to the religious education of man.

Whatever may be the modern view of the Bible, we know that the Bible has been the great teacher of religion for the dominant peoples of civilization. It taught not only the Jews, but inspired and directed, in various ways and degrees, Mohametanism and Christianity.

But the Bible itself is not a uniform book. Its several parts show a variety of attitude and conception concerning religious practice. There is, if not contradiction, certainly difference. There is the Law and the Prophets and Wisdom, all of which, if properly understood, forms the synthesis of biblical thought and teaching. Various men and ages have responded to one or the other of these different voices

in the Bible. Each has had much to do with the religious education of mankind.

Now, the Psalms, in this regard, have played an important part. They have taught men religion not by precept nor by preachment, but by example. They are religion. They breathe religion. They are religion alive, at work, religion reflected in the experience of men. I have said that the Psalms have been called the response of the human heart to God. Professor Cornill has said even more significantly that the Psalms are Religion become Word. It is the soul of Religion that speaks in the Psalms, in accents clear and melodious. There is the accent of trust, of joy, of worship, of wonder and triumph. These are the supreme facts and factors of the truly religious life, of the universal religious life—they are the undertone and overtone of religious experience, and what shall be left of religion when the last disputant has spoken and the last critic has died. It is what, above all, men want to know and feel about religion. And this the world has learnt from the Psalms more than any other part of the Bible.

Then, we see the influence of the Psalms in the active life of men.

When we read such a book as Mr. Prothero's, we must marvel at the large number and variety of men who were actually helped in their life and tasks by the Psalms. The record of this influence, of this service and help, can never be complete. On all possible occasions, the Psalms have been used as a source of help, inspiration, and spiritual expression. By all kinds of individuals have they been thus used—by king and peasant, priest and soldier, princess and nun. For private and public ceremonies, in times of trial and triumph, for joy and lament, the Psalms have offered material. They have been the voice, as well as the companion, of humanity.

Christian writers tell of what the Psalms thus have meant in the life of Christians. What, then, shall we say of the part they have played in the checkered life of the Jew? They were the daily food of the Jew. Even before they could become a mainstay and inspiration to others, they were such to the Jew. They

sprang from the soul of the Jew, from his experience, and needs. Psalms were sung by David watching his flocks amid the hills of Judea, they were chanted by Levites in the temple of Jerusalem, they fused with the sighs and sobs of the exiles on the banks of the Euphrates, they burst forth in triumph from the joyous hearts of the captives returning from Babylon: the Maccabees fought to the inspiring strains of the Psalms, the Spanish exiles solaced their hearts with them as they were scattered to the four winds by a cruel country, and I am sure that Jewish martyrs today still find in those Psalms strength and comfort. Mr. Oesterley has written a study of "The Psalms in the Jewish Church." Volumes might be written on what part and influence the Psalms have had in Jewish life, as well as in the life of humanity in general.

Finally, the Psalms have had an incalculable influence on literature.

First, the translation of the Psalms in various languages has meant an enrichment of literature. What book occupies a higher place in English poetry

than the Psalter? Secondly, the Psalms have inspired the religious poetry of both Jews and Christians. The finest hymns are those written under the inspiration of the faith and vision, as well as the diction, of the Psalms, to say nothing of the paraphrasing of the Psalms which has engaged some of the best poets, and which, alas! could never approach the original for beauty and power. And, thirdly, some of the noblest poems, though not technically religious poems, could not and would not have sprung into being but for the inspiration of the Psalms. It is a psalm that inspired, for instance, Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven."

When we consider this influence of the Psalms in the religious consciousness of the race, in the active life of men, and in the literature of the world, we shall not wonder that Mr. Watts-Dunton has called the lyric of the Bible the Great Lyric. "The Psalms," says Prof. Cornill, "are the prayer-book and the hymnal of Israel; as Israel is above all the people of religion, so the Psalms are the prayer-book and hymnal of the whole world, or at least deserve to be. Of the many treasures that

Israel has given to the world, they are perhaps the most precious. They re-echo, and will continue to re-echo, as long as there are men, made in the image of God, in whose heart the holy fire of Religion shines and glows; for they are Religion become Word. Of them may be said what one of the noblest among them says of the revelation of God in Nature: 'There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard: their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' "